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ABSTRACT

This paper is an effort to explore the connections between feminist methodologies and more traditional research programs, specifically the ethnography of communication. The paper discusses four major areas. The paper provides an overview of the ethnography of communication. Second, the paper discusses feminist methodologies. Third, the paper explores the areas in which feminist methodologies and the ethnography of communication converge and diverge. Fourth, the paper discusses an ethnographer of communication, focusing specifically on examples from a recent research project. The goal of the paper is to provide insight into how feminist methodologies and the ethnography of communication might inform each other. Contains 23 references. (Author)

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Feminist Methodologies and the Ethnography of Communication

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Abstract

This paper is an effort to explore the connections between feminist methodologies and more traditional research programs, specifically the ethnography of communication. I discuss four major areas. First, I provide an overview of the ethnography of communication. Second, I discuss feminist methodologies. Third, I explore the areas in which feminist methodologies and the ethnography of communication converge and diverge. Fourth, I discuss myself as an ethnographer of communication, focussing specifically on examples from a recent research project. The goal of my discussion is to provide insight into how feminist methodologies and the ethnography of communication might inform each other.

Feminist Methodologies and the Ethnography of Communication

In this paper, I try to accomplish what feminist scholars often seek: understanding. Specifically, I try to understand what feminist methodologies are and how they may incorporate traditional methods. As feminist scholarship continues to develop, it is important to explore its implications for other research programs. An understanding of what feminist methodologies are and how they relate to one traditional communication research program, the ethnography of communication, may contribute to the process of understanding the interrelationships among research programs.

My search for understanding looks very neat now, printed on white paper, organized in a logical way. The struggle is in large part left out -- the process is not so much reflected in the product, contrary to feminist scholarship. The product of my struggle, however, is presented here.

In the following pages, I do four things. First, I provide a brief overview of the ethnography of communication. My rationale for doing this is twofold. One, I want to make sure that you and I are starting at the same place with our conceptualizations of ethnography of communication. Two, I want to unpack my assumptions about research in order to better examine their relationship to feminist methodologies. Second, I provide a description of feminist methodologies. This is the part of the paper in which I struggled most. I do not claim to have captured every aspect of feminist methodologies, but I do hope that I have revealed the essence of the enterprise. Third, I comment on how feminist methodologies and the ethnography of communication converge and diverge. Fourth, I discuss myself as an ethnographer of

communication, focusing specifically on examples from a recent research project. Through these four sections, I situate myself as an ethnographer of communication informed by a feminist perspective. In so doing, I negotiate how feminist methodologies and ethnography of communication might inform each other.

Ethnography of Communication

I study the ethnography of communication because it makes sense to me, because the epistemology it propounds resonates with my experience of the world. The emphasis, however, does not follow a single credo; rather, there are traditional ethnographers, critical ethnographers, and literary ethnographers of communication. I study traditional ethnography, but always find myself studying how it is that women make sense of the world. This pattern is why I now consider it important to explore feminist methodologies -- to understand more about what I do.

My first step in examining the relationship between feminist methodologies and the ethnography of communication was to uncover the assumptions I hold as a researcher. My theoretical and methodological assumptions stem from the ethnography of speaking. Revisiting ethnography, then, seems like a good place to start.

What are the origins of the ethnography of communication? The ethnography of communication originated from a call to investigate the relationship between language and culture (Hymes, 1962). Before 1962, the predominant attitude was that patterns of speaking could be taken for granted. In anthropology circles, although language, kinship, politics, economics, etc. were all seen to differ, there was no assumption that the use of language across kinship, politics, economics, etc. had its own behavioral patterning and its own culturally distinct meanings. In

linguistics, it was believed that although the sounds people make are very organized, what people do with the organized sounds they make is idiosyncratic.

Hymes (1962), however, believed that the phenomenon of speaking was something in and of itself. He had some new questions: If spoken interaction in social life is ordered and this ordering is meaningful to people and varies across societies, how should researchers be hearing this interaction? He proposed that an ethnography of speaking would fill the gap between what is usually described in grammar, and what is usually described in ethnographies. Although both use speech as evidence of other patterns, neither brings it into focus in terms of its own patterns (Hymes, 1962).

What is the ethnography of communication? Hymes based his proposal for this research program on three working assumptions that privilege speech: "1. the speech of a group constitutes a system; 2. speech and language vary cross-culturally in function; [and] 3.the speech activity of a community is the primary object of attention" (Hymes, 1962, p. 132). Hymes made a distinction between speech and language much like Saussure's distinction between langue and parole (Saussure, 1959). Language is a more etic category than speech. Although communities may share a *language*, it is the *speaking* evidenced in the community that should be studied, for it is in the speaking that the culture is revealed.

Hymes (1974) urged researchers to move away from the exclusive study of grammars and toward the study of speech in general in an effort to counter the imposition of predetermined values and patterns of speech onto existing cultures. As he asserted, "where community members find patterns natural, we do not want to have to make them out to be unnatural" (1974,

p. 433). In trying to direct attention to "ways of speaking," he urged researchers to emphasize the subject matter rather than the process. "Ways of speaking" (Hymes, 1974) are a major concern to ethnographers of speaking, for it is through the discovery of the ways of speaking associated with particular groups of people that we can discover more about their ways of life. But, how does ethnography of communication get done? Ethnography of communication draws primarily from traditional qualitative methods (participant observation, open-ended interviews) although demographic surveys and short questionnaires are also used. What makes ethnography of communication different is its focus on the "ways of speaking" of a community. Knowing how to uncover and understand the important speech patterns in a community is crucial to a researcher in this area.

Without a comprehensive framework to guide the study of "ways of speaking," researchers are liable to miss important clues into "the competence that enables members of a community to conduct and interpret speech" (Hymes, 1972. p. 7). "Ways of speaking" assist participants in being competent members of their community. Speaking competence underlies communicative conduct both within and between communities. In order to investigate the interaction of language and social life that allows for competent conduct, a methodological framework is needed (Hymes, 1972).

Rather than setting up a rigid set of criteria for ways of speaking to meet, Hymes (1972) provided some guidelines and structures, in the form of sixteen components of speech, for examining ways of speaking that communities identify as important and meaningful. The framework provides the tools to uncover "ways of speaking," but leaves the defining for the users

of the "way" itself. That is, because "ways of speaking" should be important to and salient in the communities in which they exist, preconceived ideas about the presence or absence of particular "ways of speaking" in particular communities should be avoided.

Hymes' (1972) etic framework ideally outlines all possibly meaningful areas of the interlocutors' speech and, from that etic, it is possible to construct an emic, what is discovered about a particular group. If a culture is an historically transmitted, socially constructed set of symbols and their meanings, premises and rules (G. Philipsen, personal communication, 1991), then a community is a group of people that shares a culture. "Ways of speaking" allow us to see into specific communities and their cultures by examining native names and terms for speech events and speaking in a community.

Feminist Methodology

Feminist methodology has arisen out of the recognition that much of what has been done in the way of research has been male biased and male dominated (see Du Bois, 1983; Hawkins, 1989; Klein, 1983; Mies, 1983; Spitzack & Carter, 1989). Everything that women do is measured against what men (or, rather, "humans") do (Harding, 1987; Klein, 1983). The male bias, however, cannot be remedied by simply adding women to studies (Harding, 1987). According to Harding (1987), adding women to traditional analyses causes problems because of the three obvious candidates for addition: 1. women social scientists; 2. women who contributed to the public life social scientists were already studying; 3. women who had been victims of male dominance. Adding these women gets at the experiences of only a narrow group of women. A particular danger in adding women who have been victims is the

promotion of the idea that women can only be victims.

In order to allow a picture of women to emerge that is not painted with the brushes and in the color of traditional research, new methodologies need to be developed. In order to let marginalized voices speak, a new form needs to be created. It is important to understand that a feminist methodology does not require that an entire new set of methods be developed. Rather, it requires that the current methods be used in new ways.

What is the impetus for a feminist methodology?

> Feminist researchers have argued that traditional theories have been applied in ways that make it difficult to understand women's participation in social life, or to understand men's activities as gendered (vs. as representing "the human") (Harding, 1987, p. 3).

Women traditionally have not been represented in research. There has been an assumption, however, that science is neutral, that it is value-free, and represents all people. Not only do feminist researchers reject the notion of neutrality that underlies most research, but we see it as dangerous to women (Carter & Spitzack, 1989; Du Bois, 1983; Foss & Foss, 1989; Hawkins, 1989; Mies, 1983). What is "neutral" in research is actually masculine:

> The androcentric or phallocentric fallacy about women in virtually all of social science has been this: The 'person' has been considered to be *male*, and the female, the woman has been defined in terms, not of what she *is*, but of what she is not. Woman has been defined as *'not-a-man.'* And things female have tended to be seen -- in sociology, anthropology, history, as well as in psychology -- as anomalies, deviations from the male norm and the ideal of the 'person' (Du Bois, 1983, p. 107).

Research on women centers around a model of deficiency. Somehow, women do not live up to the male standard.

Science is not value-free; moreover, science is shaped by our culture (Du Bois, 1983). As such, science reinforces dominant social values and conceptions of reality. Science based on values that deviate from the prevailing ones is generally ignored, or deemed "unscientific" (Du Bois, 1983). However, science based on values that deviate from prevailing ones also presents perspectives of reality from voices seldom heard.

Klein (1983) makes a case for a feminist methodology noting that feminist means "assuming a perspective in which women's experiences, ideas and needs (differing as they may be) are valid in their own right, and androcentricity -- man-as-the-norm -- stops being the only recognized form of reference for human beings" (p. 89), and that methodology includes not only the overall conception of the research project, but the choice of the appropriate research techniques as well. Methodology, in essence, mediates between theory and method.

What is a feminist methodology? A feminist methodology is a way of approaching a research project. The how-to's informed by a feminist methodology are essentially the same as traditional how-to's; the difference is in the way the procedures are actually carried out. For example, interview techniques should adapt to the interactional norms of the participants, rather than assuming that the traditional interview model will obtain the most accurate data (Briggs, 1986).

When exploring a feminist methodology, it is important to realize the close relationship between theory, methodology, and method. In addition, there is not *one* feminist methodology; there are actually multiple feminist methodologies (Collins, 1990). By uncovering some of the

underlying assumptions of a feminist methodology and how they become manifest in methods is a useful way to understand how a feminist methodology differs from more traditional methodologies. In so doing, the theories of social interaction which feed and are fed by a feminist methodology will be revealed.

An underlying belief of a feminist methodology is that the structure and process of methods are inseparable (Foss & Foss, 1989). The method used in a given situation is determined by the unique characteristics of the field setting (Klein, 1983). Both theory and method are data driven. There is a dialectical relationship between theory and method (Klein, 1983).

The focal concern of a feminist methodology is research "for" women, not research "on" women (Harding, 1987; Klein, 1983; Mies, 1983). The difference here is that researchers should actively participate in actions, movements, and struggles for women's emancipation (Mies, 1983). A feminist methodology is emancipatory. And, in keeping with its emancipatory inclination, another aim is to change the status quo (Mies, 1983).

One of the most salient moves feminist methodologists make is to reject the dichotomies present in traditional research. The dichotomies include the researcher/researched relationship, objective/subjective ways of knowing, and quantitative/qualitative methods. These dichotomies serve to perpetuate the power differences inherent in research, and also tend to reinforce the division between feminine and masculine. Re-examining these dichotomies, and redefining the assumptions they have long upheld, are crucial moves in developing a new way of looking at the world, whether that new way be feminist, or not.

Underlying the reconceptualization of the relationship between the researcher and the researched are two important notions. The first is that research is not neutral, that there is always a power dynamic at work in research. The second is that there is not one objective reality; both the researcher and the researched have perspectives on the experiences being studied, and all of the perspectives are valid.

Feminist methodology promotes the idea of intersubjectivity, that there is a dialectical relationship between the subject (the researched) and the object (the researcher) that creates the knowledge in a study (Klein, 1983). Given the call for intersubjectivity, where is the researcher situated in the study? The researcher should assume a view from below; that is, research must be brought to serve the interests of dominated, exploited, and oppressed groups (Mies, 1983). Researchers have traditionally held power positions in research settings. Only by somehow inverting the power structure can participants be served by research.

In many cases, if the researcher is part of the community being studied, he or she will also have what is called either outsider-within status (Collins, 1990), or double consciousness (Du Bois, 1983). This means that she will have a foot in each world, both the world she is studying, and the world she is reporting to. This kind of status affords the researcher the ability to be conscious of how her steps in one world affect her steps in the other. Along with striving for intersubjectivity, the researcher should be self-reflexive (Reinharz, 1983). Being aware of, and acknowledging where you are in respect to the research before, during, and after it is an important part of feminist methodology. This recognition of your own perspectives and how they influence and change the research setting is another way the neutrality and objectivity myths

of research are rebuked.

The feminist researcher, then, occupies a space quite different than she does in much traditional research. The researched, too, occupy a different space. This is evident both in the way the research is done and in the way it is presented to others. In the research process, the perspective of the participants is considered an invaluable part of what questions are asked, how they are asked, and how conclusions are drawn (Reinharz, 1983). There is a collaborative air to the project. This is evidenced in the final display of the project. Rather than one voice in the report, multiple voices are heard. Feminist methodologies reject the one-way action of traditional research and adopt an interactional approach to study where both researcher and researched are knowers.

The objective or subjective label often put on researchers' and others' interpretations is also something that a feminist methodology rejects (Du Bois, 1983; Langellier & Hall, 1989; Spitzack & Carter, 1989). This dichotomy as well as many others reinforces the division between masculine and feminine. That which is scientific is related to that which is masculine, not feminine (Spitzack & Carter, 1989). Feminist methodologists, however, assert that there is not one objective way of seeing the world. Rather, a feminist methodology promotes a "conscious partiality" (Mies, 1983). Instead of assuming an (impossible) value-free stance, researchers' attitudes are described and discussed not only as a situating strategy, but also as part of the data. The researcher has, in fact, influenced the social setting she is studying.

A feminist methodology promotes some different topics than traditional research, and so it is important to examine what count as topics. In keeping with its emancipatory nature, socially

significant problems are prominent topics for feminist scholars (Reinharz, 1983). The study of women's individual and social history is also important (Mies, 1983).

The data used to inform these topics is also a bit different than in much traditional research, and this ties back to the idea of subjective and objective discussed early. Women's experiences are privileged. Feelings, behavior, thoughts, and insights either witnessed or experienced all count as data (Reinharz, 1983). In addition, everyday life is explored. Feminist research focuses on "natural events encased in their ongoing contexts" (Reinharz, 1983, p. 170).

Not only is the content of what is being studied an important source of data, but both the process and structure of data gathering count as data (Kauffman, 1992). For example, Kauffman (1992) completed a study in which she interviewed women artists in New York City and in Philadelphia. Her attempts to arrange interview times and places, as well as the temporal and spatial elements of the interviews in each city gave her enormous insight into the different lifestyles and attitudes of her participants.

Data are also analyzed differently from a feminist perspective. The analysis is done during the study, relying on inductive logic (Reinharz, 1983). Participants' perspectives are valued. Validity, an important issue addressed in feminist methodology, is measured in ways that explore the "completeness, plausibility, illustrativeness, understanding, [and] responsiveness to readers' or subjects experience" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 171). In addition, triangulation is suggested, in the belief that "multiple sources and diverse data contribute better than single sources and methods to our understanding of research questions and their contexts" (Foss & Foss, 1989, p. 250).

The multiplicity of perspectives includes not only the people involved in the study, but the research methods used to complete the study. The quantitative/qualitative dichotomy is broken down so that the knowledge gained by each feeds the other, rather than the knowledge gained by one replacing the other (Staley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1989). By allowing a variety of perspectives to be heard, a more comprehensive picture of a community can be seen.

The following analogy between research methods and an orchestra helps illustrate the way diverse methods can work together. During early rehearsals, the group sounds more cacophonic than symphonic. No one knows his or her part very well, and it shows. As rehearsals progress, the group sounds better because everyone knows her part better. Still, though, each individual knows her part better than she knows how it relates to the whole. Finally, the players start listening to each other, and the sound becomes quite amazing. At times one person may have a solo, a chance to shine for a moment while others play quietly. Later, the soloist plays quietly while another shines. It is much the same with methods (really!). As a beginning researcher, I have my part. I don't know it very well, but I have it and I try to join the rest of the group. The results are a little chaotic at times. Later, as I refine my skills (and others do the same), we at least do well what we know. Still later, when we start listening to what other people are doing, we can see how our parts fit in with everyone else's parts, and we get a better sense of the whole enterprise. Maybe one particular method works better for finding out particular things (like quantitative methods working best for finding out demographic information) while another method works best for something else (like observations working best for trying to see actual behavior). When one method is foregrounded, the others serve as

background, much like when one musician is a soloist, the rest of the orchestra plays quietly.

Feminist methodologies inform every aspect of research, from theory development to research procedures to data analysis and presentation. Feminist research gets done differently in different disciplines, depending on the various constraints bearing on the project.

Feminist Methodology and the Ethnography of Speaking

The closer our subject matter to our own life and experience, the more we can probably expect our own beliefs about the world to enter into and shape our work -- to influence the very questions we pose, our conception of how to approach those questions, and the interpretations we generate from our findings (Du Bois, 1983, p. 105).

What could be closer to me and other female speech communication researchers than women and our communication? After all, we all communicate everyday at some level. Communication scholars are enmeshed in the social and cultural systems about which they speak and write (Spitzack & Carter, 1989).

Ethnographic methods seem to fit the bill in many ways for feminist scholars (Stacey, 1991). There are many reasons why ethnography is seen as a friendly method to feminist researchers. Stanley and Wise (1983) note that ethnomethodology is often called "'sociology without balls'" and continue to say that "something which so arouses the scorn and disgust of social scientists because of its 'effeminacy' is an obvious candidate for feminism's interest and support" (p. 203). Traditional ethnography does not have the political agenda that feminist methodology supports. Rather, its goal is understanding for understanding's sake, not for emancipation's sake.

Ethnography, though, seems to fit many of the criteria feminists call for in research methods (Stacey, 1991). It emphasizes experiential reality, focusing on how people live everyday lives (Stacey, 1991; Stanley & Wise, 1983). In addition, "it goes beyond this to argue that such concepts and beliefs are used by us and others in appropriate ways in appropriate settings, and that by 'doing' these we both give accounts of them and at the same time we so construct the reality these are accounts of" (Stanley & Wise, p. 204). As with feminist methodology, ethnography strives to understand. In the case of ethnography of communication, it strives to understand how communicative behaviors reveal both the reality of interlocutors, and the construction of this reality.

The positioning of the researcher in ethnography vis-a-vis the research project is also an important consideration. "Ethnomethodology rejects the notion that there is any sharp distinction between members' and social science approaches; there are no dichotomies, only gradations" (Stanley & Wise, p. 204). Some argue (Kauffman, 1992), however, that ethnographers do not see themselves as political subjects, particularly in the area of literary ethnography. The ethnographer is not part of the report.

There is also an inevitable social and cultural gap between the observer and the observed, and between the moments of observation and the moments of theorizing (Kauffman, 1992). The gap between the observer and observed can be mediated somewhat by acknowledging and analyzing that the observer interacts in and influences the social setting being observed. Particularly in a field that focuses on communication, it would seem important to document the interactional influence of the researcher. Although Kauffman (1992) sees a gap between the

moments of observation and the moments of theorizing, I do not see this same kind of gap. Just as feminist methodologies support data driven theorizing, so too does ethnography of communication. In addition, ethnographic research methods are adapted to the situation at hand, a technique that can only be carried out if the observation and analysis phases of study are done in tandem.

The ethnographer is actually an instrument of research, drawing on resources of empathy, connection, and concern, important tenets also of feminist research (Stacey, 1991). Ethnographic researchers also provide greater respect for and power to one's research subjects, allowing participants to inform the process of study.

Stacey (1991) actually wrote an article asking, "Can there be a feminist ethnography?" She noted two major areas of contradiction between feminist methods and ethnography related to the theme that with the greater level of intimacy in ethnography comes the greater chance of manipulation of participants. The first is that there is a risk to the research subjects of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer in the ethnographic research process:

> for no matter how welcome, even enjoyable, the field-worker's presence may appear to "natives," fieldwork represents an intrusion and intervention into a system of relationships, a system of relationships that the researcher is far freer than the researched to leave. The inequality and potential treacherousness of this relationship is inescapable" (Stacey, p. 113).

The problem of exploitation of the "natives" is certainly a prominent theme in anthropological ethnography. There is a big concern with the "other." The ethnography of communication

program calls for the use of ethnographic methods for studying people closer to home, that the methods anthropologists have long used to look at "strange cultures" can be used to study our own culture(s). The distance between the researcher and the researched, therefore, is much smaller in all regards. It is also more difficult for the researcher to leave the situation. The potential for manipulation is still present, but it is not nearly as portentous as in traditional anthropological ethnography.

The second area of contradiction Stacey (1991) cites is the dissonance between fieldwork practice and ethnographic product. Regardless of the collaborative relationship between researcher and researched in ethnography, the researcher is the ultimate author in most cases. The final document is "structured primarily by a researcher's purposes, offering a researcher's interpretations, registered in a researcher's voice" (p. 114). The researcher as objective reporter of facts is again a present force in the final product. The data used in ethnography of communication are often discourse samples from the lives of the participants. In many ways, it is impossible to not include participants' voices in the final report because it is their voices that serve as data to support claims about their communication.

Stacey (1991) actually provides a "solution" to the contradictions she finds between feminist methodologies and traditional ethnographic methods -- postmodern ethnography. Postmodern ethnography is characterized as critical and self reflexive, eschewing the detached stance of neutral observation. Postmodern ethnographers acknowledge the intrusive and unequal nature of their own participation in research, and acknowledge the hierarchical and power-laden relations of ethnographic writing. Stacey (1991) suggests a postmodern ethnographic solution to

the anthropologist's predicament: Fully acknowledge the limitations of ethnographic process and product, and reduce claims made in final reports.

There can be a partial feminist ethnography that consists of accounts of culture enhanced by the application of feminist perspectives (Stacey, 1991). However, a fully feminist ethnography may not be possible because of the two contradictions she cites as well as the fact that while feminism has an antagonistic relationship to the male other, ethnographers work for alliance and collaboration with the other (whomever that might be).

Based on the multiplicity of research perspectives mentioned in the previous section, it does not seem important that one method be the feminist method. It does seem that the ethnography of communication and feminist methodologies share a lot of the same philosophy about research. And so it seems that the ethnography of communication could be both informed by the feminist perspective and add to the symphony of reports for women.

What do I do as an ethnographer of speaking?

In developing a research project for my Master's thesis, I chose to study two women attorneys. I did so because I do not like the way in which women and women's communication have been characterized in much of the communication literature. There is almost always a white male norm and a female deviant behavior. Most of the speaking styles that women supposedly have are "powerless" compared, of course, to the "powerful" styles of men (Lakoff, 1973; West & Zimmerman, 1977). Most of the research I was exposed to did not resonate with how I had lived as a woman, so I decided to reinvestigate some of the assumptions about "women's communication." I never thought of this as particularly feminist in nature. It seemed

natural to me to find a "hole" in the literature about something I thought was important and to try to fill it. Not until my father read my thesis and commented that it was "pretty feminist" did I even think of my work as feminist. Of course, I got immediately defensive -- I wouldn't want to be considered a feminist now, would I? My father then added, "Well, you're right, I just think it sounds pretty feminist." In discussing more generally how I see myself as an ethnographer of communication, I will use examples from my thesis to illustrate my points.

In actually "doing an ethnography of communication," I have used participant observation and interviews. Other methods might include diaries and questionnaires. My training has involved recognition of my initial outsider status in a community, and the possibility that I may at some time be granted some insider's perspective. During my Master's thesis research, I studied two white female attorneys, "Kate" and "Jill". I spent many hours following them around to various meetings, depositions, trials, lunches, staff gatherings. I became a known character in their law office. I also influenced the interaction I was observing -- it was impossible for me to remain simply an observer. A particularly illustrative case of this occurred during a deposition one day. It is important to note that depositions are public, but that rarely does anyone but the concerned parties attend. I had been to many depositions, but this particular one was not going well for the opposing counsel. His client was giving too much information to Kate. Finally, the opposing counsel turned to Kate, pointed at me, and said that he would not continue until I was removed from the room. Kate relied on the fact that the deposition was public as reason for my presence. She also instructed me not to leave. Eventually, the opposing counsel and his client stormed out of the room. Kate just smirked, noting that the opposing

counsel was just trying to be a bully and use me as an excuse to end the deposition. My presence in the deposition had a direct influence on its outcome.

I have also been taught that interviewing techniques must vary depending on the group membership of the persons doing the interviewing as well as the persons being interviewed (Briggs, 1986). I had an interesting experience interviewing the attorneys, an experience I later realized was typical of interviewing women. Although the questions I had prepared to ask them were based on the observations I had made of them over the previous month, I asked the questions one at a time in a very systematic way. The interview lasted about ten minutes (and, needless to say, I was panicked). Realizing that something was wrong, but not knowing what it was, I shut off my tape recorder and began just talking with each woman. After a couple of minutes, I noticed that they were talking about all of the things I wanted to know. I asked permission to turn the tape recorder back on, and ended up having a nontraditional, and very enriching, interview. I felt this was a very important point in the project, and also a very important commentary on their communication. I noted both the change in interview style and its importance in my thesis. Again, I did not think of any of this as feminist. Adapting my interview style to that of my participant seems "only fair." How can I expect someone to talk to me in a manner and format she is not comfortable with? In addition, in the interest of academic honesty, I felt I had to explain the structure of the interview since most people who read about interviews in this culture assume a particular prescribed format that was not used in my study.

After a couple of months of spending time with Kate and Jill, the line between researcher and researched began to blur a bit. We would be doing an interview, and they would ask me to

turn off the recorder so that they could tell me something really interesting that they did not want recorded. When they asked that I not include something in my report, I did not include it. I felt that it was only respectful of their privacy (and their employment) to only use material they were comfortable with other people hearing. I certainly had the opportunity to use pretty juicy bits of data, and to betray my participants in the process. I chose not to do that. Again, I did not think of this level of trust as stemming from a feminist methodology.

I organize my data along Hymes' (1972) categories and conduct thematic analyses (Spradley, 1980) of them. Although I do not explicitly ask my participants to confirm my findings, I do pose interview questions that function as validity checks. For instance, if I see particular interactional patterns in particular contexts, I will ask participants to describe their interaction in those contexts during an interview. I then have both my interpretation and the participants' interpretation of what is occurring. When these interpretations differ, I note the difference in the final report. Just because my interpretation is different, however, does not lead me to think that it is wrong; rather, it is how I see the interaction based on my training. The participants' interpretations are important because they explain how they see the interaction from a perspective that is different than mine.

When I realized that the line between me as a researcher and my participants as the researched was becoming more blurred more often -- and, that it felt okay to have that happening -- I also realized that the blurring might have something to do with the fact that I am a woman studying women, and that I am concerned with framing women and women's communication in a more positive way than has been done in the past.

Conclusion

The prospect of using ethnography of communication and feminist methodology to inform research is exciting. I think that it is important that we all examine the assumptions underlying our research agendas, and open our minds to the continually developing array of perspectives being brought to bear on communication research. Only when each player's part is finely tuned can the entire orchestra be heard.

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